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## Top News

### Hekmatyar wants interim Afghan govt.

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KABUL, Afghanistan, Dec. 3 (UPI) -- Hard-line Islamist and warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar reportedly wants a phased withdrawal of foreign forces and a neutral interim government in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported the leader of the anti-government Hizb-i-Islami group -- which has claimed responsibility for some recent suicide bomb attacks -- says a neutral caretaker government is needed to hold elections in Afghanistan.

In a statement issued during the weekend by a close associate in neighboring Pakistan's Peshawar, Hekmatyar welcomed the Japanese government's decision to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan and urged NATO members to do the same, the report said.

He called for moving foreign forces to garrisons initially, and then for withdrawing them from the country.

The Dawn report said Hekmatyar, who had once been Afghanistan's prime minister, is wanted by the U.S. government.

In his statement, he said his faction is ready for cooperation with other parties to restore peace to the country.

Hekmatyar helped end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, but since Sept. 11, 2001, has turned against both Pakistan and the United States.

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